

REMARKS

Claims 1-35 are pending in the application.

The Examiner essentially repeats the rejections set forth in the prior Office Action applying the Ardon and Franklin references.

In amplifying the rejection, in the section entitled "Response to Amendment and Argument", the Examiner points to Fig. 2 of Franklin in which the Examiner asserts that the inter-module TDM link 102 is connected between the switching modules 201 and thus this inter-module TDM link 102 provides the special-purpose link directly. However, as pointed out in applicant's prior amendment, under the interpretation taken by the Examiner, there is no second stage switching module which meets applicant's claim recitations if it is assumed that the TDM link 102 provides the direct connection.

With regard to Ardon, Figs. 4-6, the Examiner appears to equate the switching system II with applicant's second stage switching module and the switching system I with applicant's first stage switching module. The Examiner then states that the switching system II is an end office switching system which receives trunks from other switching systems and completes paths to subscribers (e.g., 220 and 221) and thereby to other switching systems through trunks 222. Under this interpretation, presumably there is another first stage switching module I which is not shown in Ardon's Fig. 6, but which is connected to the switching systems II via the interoffice trunks 22. Even if the Examiner's interpretation is followed, for the sake of argument, there is no special-purpose link between the shown switching element I and the implied (not shown) switching system I.

In order to emphasize applicant's invention and to prevent any possible misreading of applicant's claims, applicant has amended independent claims 1, 13, 24 and 30 to make it clear that the second stage switching modules provide a communication path between two of the first stage switching modules and the special-purpose link between the first stage switching modules is separate and distinct from the communication path. In other words, the normal communication path established by the second stage switching modules cannot be the same path as provided by the special-purpose link. Thus, the Franklin teaching of utilizing the TDM link 102 cannot be equated to both the communication path established by the second stage switching modules and the special-purpose link since the special-purpose link

must be separate and distinct from the communication path. Similarly, with regard to Fig. 6 of Ardon, the unshown switching system I, even if connected via a communication path established by the interoffice trunks 222 to the switching system II, does not provide a teaching of a separate and distinct special-purpose link for connecting the shown switching system I with the unshown switching system I.

As such, applicant's invention is deemed to readily distinguish over the prior art and to be patentable thereover.

In view of the amendments made hereto, the Patent and Trademark Office has not made out a *prima facie* case of obviousness under the provisions of 35 U.S.C. § 103.

The application is now believed to be in condition for allowance and an early indication of same is earnestly solicited.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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